ENG 1201 - INTRODUCTION TO LINGUISTIC

Linguistic is the scientific study of human language**,** which encompasses the description of languages, the study of their origin, processes of observation, data collection, formulation of hypothesis analysis of data and formulation of theory based on the structure of the language, and the analysis of how children acquire language and how people learn languages other than their own.

Linguist is a professional language specialist who is equipped to analyze any language, regardless of whether they speak the language or not. Linguist can also collect data on language that do not have written forms and propose letters of the alphabet (orthography) for such language.

What is language?

- **Bolinger (1986:12)** Language is a system of vocal auditory communication using conventional signs composed of arbitrary patterned sound units and assembled according to a set of rules interacting with the experience of its users.
- **Safir (1921:8)** Define language as a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced sounds.

Language, is a system of speech souds or signs which constitute linguistic knowledge of both speaker and addressee convey and receive information.

LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Language is the object of study for linguistics, and linguists study the structure of language empirically at all levels namely, ***phonetics***, ***phonology***, ***morphology***, ***syntax*** and ***semantics***. The linguistic study of language in relation to other disciplines such as ***philosophy, psychology, communication, sociology*** etc has expanded its scope. In addition, researchers in the fields of language development, teaching, and publishing have developed a field of applied linguistics through linguistic study.

BRANCHES OF LINGUISTICS

Linguistics as a science covers various areas of human language which are usually discussed under two broad areas namely, ***micro-linguistics*** and ***macro-linguistics***.

MICRO-LINGUISTICS: covers the basic components or constituents of a language. This is also referred to as theoretical linguistics. Theoretical linguists study the structural aspects of language under the broad label of grammar. Grammar is further divided into form and meaning. Under form are:

- **Phonetics*:*** concerned with the study of speech sounds and how they are produced, sent across and perceived.
- **Phonology**: is the study of the system or pattern of speech sounds used in a particular language or in language in general
- **Morphology**: study of the internal structure of words and how words are formed in a language.
- **Syntax**: is the study of how words are arranged to form sentence.
- **Semantic*:*** the study of how meaning in language is created by the use and interrelationships of words, phrases, and sentences.

MACRO-LINGUISTICS: Macro-linguistics refers to aspects of linguistic study which involve the application of the findings of theoretical linguistics to the analysis of language in use. It is also called Applied Linguistics, because it involves the application of linguistics in relation to other disciplines. The sub-fields that come under this label include:

- **Sociolinguistics:** study of society on the way language is used.
- **Historical Linguistics:** study of how languages change overtime, is also known as ***diachronic linguistic*** as opposed to ***synchronic linguistic*** which is ***non-historical linguistics.***
- **Mathematical Linguistics:** is the science of patterns; it is by finding such patterns that knowledge is compressed. Thus, mathematics compresses knowledge or information.
- **Ethno-Linguistics:** is a field of linguistic *anthropology* which studies the language of a particular ethnic group
- **Psycholinguistics:** is the study of the *psychological* and *neurobiological* factors that enable humans to acquire, use, and understand language. Psycholinguistics is concerned with the psychological mechanism underlying speech production and reception. It also studies how children acquire their first language, speech perception, and loss of the ability to use and understand language.
- **Computational Linguistics:** is an interdisciplinary field dealing with the statistical and/or rule-based modeling of natural language from a computational perspective. Computational linguistics was usually performed by computer scientists who had specialized in the application of computers to the processing of a natural language
- **Clinical Linguistics*:*** is a sub-discipline of linguistics and involves the application of linguistic theory to the field of Speech-Language Pathology. Clinical linguistics plays a key role in the description, analysis and remediation of communication impairment. The study of linguistic aspects of communication development and disorders is also of relevance to linguistic theory and our understanding of language more generally.

HISTORY OF LINGUISTICS: Linguistics has its origins dating back to as far as the 5th century B.C. However, the use of the term, 'linguistics' did not evolve until the 19th century. The origins of linguistics emerged from *philosophical studies of language* beginning with the Greeks, Romans before moving through Europe, India, and then the United States of America.

- **Linguistics in Greece (5th B.C. -13th Century A.D.)** Greece was popular for their philosophers two of whom were known for their study of the Greek grammar, ***Thrax*** and ***Protagoras***. They are credited as the first to attempt word classification which we refer to today as the parts of speech. In the first millennium BC, the Greeks were said to have developed the alphabetic system for writing the Greek language. By the second millennium the ***Myceneans*** are reported to have made use of a syllabic writing system that included the use of logograms, symbols representing words.

Various Greek scholars who contributed to the growth of linguistics include ***Protagoras, Plato, Thrax,*** and ***Zeno.*** Below is a summary of their various contributions:

1.Protagoras; word classification based on gender i.e. masculine, feminine and neuter.

2.Plato; Functional distinction of parts of speech e.g. nouns as subjects of a predicate ⊙ Distinction b/w verbs.

3.Thrax; Eight part of speech ⊙ First comprehensive and systematic description of Greek language.

4. Zeno; Distinction b/w form and meaning ⊙ Classification of Greek words into 4; noun, verb, conjunction and article ⊙Discovered ***case*** in Greek nouns ⊙ Distinguished b/w active and passive, transitive and intransitive verbs **(Ajiboye:220-221).**

Linguistic in Rome: The growth of linguistics in Rome was similar to that of Greece, Roman philosophers studied Latin grammar. However, the Greek philosophers were said to have been a great influence on their Roman counterparts.

The Roman philosophers used the Greek model in their analysis of Latin. The similar structures of Greek and Latin also made this possible. The study of Latin was conducted on its ***etymology***, ***morphology***, and ***syntax***. Similar varying points of view along the lines of various analogists like with the Greeks were observed among the Romans. However, a Latin scholar by the name ***Marcus Varro*** argued for the recognition and use of both parameters in analyzing word formation and their associated meanings. The study of Latin grammar was in terms of **1) the art of correct speech, letters and syllables 2) parts of speech 3) grammatical correctness, and 4) style**. The contributions of two Roman scholars to the study of Latin are worthy of note:

1.Marcus Varro; Worked on Latin grammar; etymology, morphology and syntax ⊙ Observed differences b/w Latin and Greek ⊙ Argued for the use of both principles of analogy and anomaly in analyzing language.

2.Priscan; Worked on regular inflections: ⊙ Produced texts used for teaching grammar ⊙ Define syllable as the smallest part of articulate speech of which the properties are the name of the letters, its written shape, and phonetic value ⊙ Defined word as the minimum unit of the sentence ⊙ Wrote a book on Medieval Grammar which formed foundation of medieval linguistic philosophy **(Ajiboye, 1999:222-223).**

Linguistics in the Renaissance Period: The medieval period or middle ages from the 13th century AD witnessed a time of Renaissance in the Roman Empire. It was a period during which Latin played a significant role in the educational system and in Christianity as the language of the church, scholarship, and culture. The materials prepared for the teaching of Latin is what developed into traditional or classical grammar.

Between the 14th and 17th centuries AD, the first grammars of several European languages were produced-***Italian, Spanish, French, Polish*** etc. The elite helped to promote the study of languages through printing. The focus became to provide rules of usage. During the same period, missionary work in China led to the study of the phonology and syntax of Chinese and the production of linguistic materials such as the ***Chinese dictionary.*** Comparative studies like that of Trigault between Chinese and languages of Western Europe were undertaken. The study of Hebrew and Arabic gained prominence during the Renaissance period. Arabic scholars were noted for presenting a description of the organs of speech and the mechanism for sound production. Scholars whose contributions promoted the growth of linguistics during the Renaissance period include ***Pierre, Ramec, Trigaukt, Galileo, Copernicus and Kelper.*** Two schools of thought in the field of philosophy that influenced linguistic studies significantly were ***Empiricism*** and ***Rationalism***. The first held the view that all human knowledge had its source in sense impression and operation of the mind upon those impressions in the form of generalizations while the second held the view that human knowledge had its source in the truths of human reason.

Towards the end of the 18th century a statement was made on The historical relationship between Sanskrit, Greek and Latin. The discovery that languages could be compared with one another marked the third phase in the growth of linguistics as a science, and gave ***comparative philology*** or ***comparative grammar*** which formed the focus of linguistic study in the 19th.

Linguistic in India : the growth of linguistics also had its root in India within the same period as of Greece and Rome. The grammarian was ***Panni*** and the ***Language of Sanskrit*** and the period was 4th century B.C. unlike Greek and Latin traditions, the grammar that developed in India was styled after the Hindu/Indian tradition. However, similarities b/w the Greco-Roman and Indian traditions include the arguments about the nature and versus conventional status of language; sacred Hindu texts were compiled the same way glossaries and commentaries were compiled for Greek and Latin. Indian grammarians were able to make a distinction between nouns and verbs like Plato did b/w the subject and predicate for Greek. Indian linguistic study did more work in ***phonetics*** and word structure, their classification of speech sounds was more comprehensive than any other work achieved before late 19th century.

Pannis work on the structure of words in Sanskrit made him well-known and ranked among the best. Western scholars discovered his work on Sanskrit by the middle of the 19th century and this led to the developed of philology.

Linguistic in the Late 18th and Early 19th Century : Linguistic studies blossomed during this period with research into the other aspects of language study but particularly in the area of historical and comparative linguistics. Further research was conducted on relationship between Sanskrit and European languages; Indian scholars debated general linguistic theory with focus on the nature of the word and meaning. Phonetic description comprised ***a) processes of speech production b) phonetic segments, and c) combination of speech sounds in phonological structures.*** Indian linguists identified four parts of speech-noun, verb, preposition and article. German linguists also featured prominently during this period

1.Raymond Rask (1787-1832)&Jacod Grim (1785-1863): Developed the comparative and historical study of Indo-European language family.

2.Franz Bopp (1791-1867): Author of the ***"The Sanskrit Conjugation System"*** a comparative work on Sanskrit, Germanic, Greek, Latin and Persian.

3.Benfey: The author of ***"The History of Linguistics ad Oriental Philology in Germany"***

4.Jacob Ludwig Karl Grimm (1785-1863): Founder of Germanic Studies, published a book on German grammar, and author of Grimm's Law on Sound Shift.

5. Wilhem von Humboldt (1767-1835): Authored a book on an ***Introduction to General Linguistics*.** His view that a language makes infinite use of ***finite*** means and that the grammar should be a description of the processes that make that possible came to form the basis of Chomsky's famous modern ***generative grammar.***

6.Schleicher A (1821-1868): Author of several books on historical linguistics and linguistic theory e.g. 'Compendium of ***The comparative grammar of the Indo-Germanic languages' (1861)***

7. Max Muller: popular comparative studies through his lectures on the Science of Language (1861).

8. Cyrus H. K. Curtis (1850-1933): was a philologist known for his work on ***Principles of Greek Etymology*** (1879) which was one of the first works to reconcile comparative grammar with classical philology.

Linguistics in the 20th Century

This period can be said to have witnessed the emergence of the era of modern linguistics. Linguistic theories formed the focus in Europe and America, and were tested on language around the world. Among the several notable linguists of this period, two of them featured prominently, **Ferdinard de Saussure (1857-1913)** and **Noam Chomsky (1957).**

Ferdinard de Saussure was a Swiss scholar often referred to as the father of modern linguistics. He is famous for his book which is a collection of his lectures on linguistic theory titled ***Cours de linguistique generale*** **(A course in General Linguistics).** In particular, Saussure is credited with developing the linguistic theory of structuralism. He is also known for his distinction between language as langue and parole. For Saussure, langue is 'a storehouse' of grammatical forms collectively owned by speakers of a language, residing in the brain of each speaker. Parole on the other hand, is the part of language that reflects its variant nature, and is not accounted for in linguistic description. Saussure's theory formed the basis for traditional or classical grammar.

Thereafter, notable linguists who emerged with their versions of linguistic theory include **Henry Sweet and Firth in Britain, Bloomfield, Bloch, Fries Harris, Hockett, Nida and Boas, Pike in the United States** Their theories replaced traditional grammar and established structuralism.

By **1957**, **Noam Chomsky** emerged with his linguistic theory which he defined as being concerned with the grammatical system of an ideal speaker-listener in a homogenous speech community. For him, the object of study is the speaker's knowledge of his/her language which he refers to as competence. Like Saussure, he makes a distinction between language as knowledge that resides in the brain and its actual use which he refers to as performance. Chomsky's work established ***generativism*** as a theoretical approach. Theories based on this approach include the standard theory, extended standard theory, generative grammar, government and binding (1981), **minimalist theory** (1995), x-bar theory; others are autosegmental phonology by Goldsmith 1976, and lexical phonology by Kiparsky 1982.

Linguistics in Nigeria

The growth of linguistics in places like Europe, India, and the United States of America as briefly described in the preceding sections fa outweighs linguistic efforts in Nigeria. Indeed, there is no record of linguistic research in Nigeria before the late 18th century. The earliest recorded linguistic efforts are in the late 19th and early 20th centuries led mostly by missionaries. With about 510 languages spoken, most of the languages do not have written forms. As a result, the concentration of early linguistic efforts was on developing orthographies. It is reported that the first Nigerian language samples were collected by the Portuguese around 1600, but more detailed study of some African languages was published in 1812. The work included vocabularies for six Nigerian languages-***Hausa, Kanuri, Fulani, Igbo, Ijaw, and Ibibio***. Apart from Yoruba which had a Nigerian, Samuel Ajayi Crowther work on the language, other linguistic works were conducted by non-Nigerians in the early period of linguistics in Nigeria. In the 1840s, the Scottish Presbyterian mission at Calabar worked on Efik; the Methodist and Roman Catholic mission worked on Yoruba and Igbo. Notable among individuals who carried out linguistic work on Nigerian languages are **Clapperton** between **1824-1844**, **Bowdich** in **1819**, **Hannah Kilham, Raban, Baudin** in **1884**, **Westermann**, **Reverend Wood** on **Yoruba**; **Mignod** in **1914** and **Schon** in **1844** on **Hausa**; and **Abraham** between **1934 - 1949** on **Hausa** and **Idoma**. Linguistic studies in Nigeria blossomed with the establishment of the first University at Ibadan in 1948. The first generation of academic linguists who researched on Nigerian languages were non-Nigerians, they included William Welmers, Robert Armstrong and Kay Williamson. They in turn trained the first group of Nigerian linguists who have also trained others. They include **Ayo Bamgbose, Oladele Awobuluyi** who worked on **Yoruba**; and **Ben Elugbe** who worked on **Edoid languages**. The main focus among other linguistic research interests has remained the description of Nigerian languages. Currently, less than one-third of 510 Nigerian languages have their orthographies.

Aim and Relevance of Linguistics

Linguistics takes as data all human languages. According to Saussure (1991: 6-7), the aims of linguistics are as follows:

• To describe all known languages and record their history. This involves tracing the history of language families and, as far as possible, reconstructing the parent language of each family;

• To determine the forces operating, permanently and universally in all language, and to formulate general laws which account for all particular linguistics phenomena historically attested.

• To delimit and define linguistics itself.

CONCLUSION

Linguistics is unique as a discipline because it attempts to study a social phenomenon like human language from a scientific perspective. It is also unique because it has forged close relationships with several other disciplines to the extent that the line of demarcation is often not so clear.

The Basic Characteristics of Human Language

1. All languages are equal. There are no inferior languages
2. All languages change over time. No language is static, all languages are dynamic unless they are not being used in daily social interaction.
3. All languages have an arbitrary relationship between sounds and meanings
4. All languages have a finite set of sounds. Languages use between 10 and 70 meaningful sounds
5. All languages have consonant and vowel sounds.
6. All languages have grammars. They contain rules for the same purpose: to produce grammatically correct sentences in that language.
7. All languages make gender distinctions. Languages reflect universal semantic features of male or female, human or animate distinctions
8. All languages have a way of making statements, questions, commands, negation, and time
9. Human languages have ways of indicating the case relationship between the nouns and verbs.
10. Human languages have a means of indicating the tense and aspect of the verb
11. Human languages have ways of combining simple sentences into complex ones
12. All languages can be learned. Any child, regardless of geographical location, ethnic background, has the capacity to learn any language to which he or she is exposed.

SIGN LANGUAGE